



DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE
UCLA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
CENTER FOR THE HEALTH SCIENCES
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024
April 25, 1985

Harold E. Varmus, M.D.
Chairman, Retrovirus Study Group
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
School of Medicine
University of California
San Francisco, Ca 94143

Dear Dr. Varmus:

In 1981 I and my associates at UCLA first recognized and reported the syndrome which was subsequently named AIDS. I continue to work with patients with this disorder, and more recently with individuals in risk groups and in the general population who are found to have antibody to the retrovirus strongly implicated as the etiologic agent.

I am writing to convey my concerns as a clinician about sentiment for nomenclature which would identify the agent as the "AIDS virus." I believe that this nomenclature would be unfortunate. It is estimated that over one million persons in the U.S. alone have serum antibodies. The fully expressed AIDS syndrome is well publicized to be a lethal intractable illness associated with considerable suffering. In my view the term "AIDS virus" would create considerable distress among all individuals found to have previous exposure. In addition the term is imprecise since isolates have been found to be genetically diverse.

I am hopeful that your Study Group will also wish to avoid creating widespread social distress, and will see fit to designate the agent in accord with the remarkable amount of scientific information accumulated to date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael S. Gottlieb".

Michael S. Gottlieb, M.D.

Acting Chief
Division of Clinical Immunology